

BLACK SLUICE

INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD



Environment Committee Meeting

Tuesday, 4th March 2025 at 2pm

Station Road, Swineshead, Lincolnshire, PE20 3PW



Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board

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Our Ref: DW/JL/B10

Your Ref:

Date: 25th February 2025

To all Members of the Environment Committee and Invited Guests

Notice is hereby given that a Meeting of the Environment Committee will be held at the offices of the Board on Tuesday, 4th March 2025 at 2:00pm at which your attendance is requested.

The Board are conscious of reducing the amount of printing where possible, therefore some items on the agenda will only be found on the Board's website at the following link:

<https://www.blacksluiceidb.gov.uk/resources/document-library/meetings/>

Daniel Withnall
Chief Executive

AGENDA

1. Recording the meeting.
2. To welcome guests and receive apologies for absence.
3. Declarations of interest.
4. To review the Environment Committee Terms of Reference (**pages 1 & 2**)
5. To receive and, if correct, sign the Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 27th February 2024 (**pages 3 - 10**)
6. Matters arising.
7. To review the Biodiversity Action Plan 2021 – 2026 (**website**)
 - (a) BAP Action Progress update (**pages 11 - 20**)
 - (b) Moving forward with a Biodiversity Action Plan from 2026+ (**verbal**)
8. To receive a report on Environmental Work completed in 2024/25 and recommendations for proposed works for 2025/26 (**pages 21 - 34**)
9. To receive the 2024 Black Sluice IDB Barn Owl Box Reports (**pages 35 & 36**)
10. To receive a report on the 2024 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly Conservation and Wildlife Area, Amber Hill (**pages 37 - 39**)
11. To review the following policies:
 - (a) Policy No. 53: Biosecurity (**pages 40 - 46**)
 - (b) New Policy: Conservation (from website) (**pages 47 – 51**)
 - (c) New Policy: Working near badgers (**pages 52 - 54**)
 - (d) New Policy: Working near Water Voles (**pages 55 - 57**)
12. To receive a report from Tammy Smalley, Head of Conservation, Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust on various environmental topics (**verbal**)
13. To receive a report from Aiden Davies, Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership, on various environmental topics (**verbal**)
14. To receive a report on the Board's CO2 Emissions (**pages 58 & 59**)
15. Any Other Business.

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - 04 MARCH 2025

AGENDA ITEM 04

TERMS OF REFERENCE: ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

1. GENERAL

The Committee shall have TEN members who will be appointed by the Board, five members from each of the Works Committee.

The Membership shall include:

- Chairperson of the Board
- Vice Chairperson of the Board

The Committee Chairperson shall be appointed by the Committee at the triennial general meeting meeting being the first meeting following an election.

2. MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee shall meet at least once in every 12-month period and a quorum shall be five members.

No one other than the Committee members, members of the public and Board Officers shall be entitled to attend Committee Meetings, but any other persons may attend meetings as a guest if invited by the Committee.

3. POWERS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Committee has the authority to utilise a budgetary amount as agreed by the Board at the beginning of each financial year on Environmental Projects and Works.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COMMITTEE

The responsibilities of the Committee shall be:

1. To monitor the Board's performance in relation to the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan and Government's Environmental Targets.
2. To promote best practice through employee training and awareness.
3. To inform the public of the Board's commitment to Environmental issues.
4. To promote initiatives, within watercourses maintained by the Board under statutory powers, that result in a meaningful environmental gain.

5. REPORTING

Minutes of meetings of the Committee shall be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

The Committee shall review its terms of reference after every triennial general meeting and its own effectiveness and recommend any necessary changes to the Board.

REVIEWED BY THE COMMITTEE:
APPROVED BY THE BOARD:

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

MINUTES

of the proceedings of a meeting of the Environment Committee

held at the offices of the Board on
27th February 2024 at 2pm

Members

Chairperson - * Mr P Holmes

* Mr W Ash	* Mr J Atkinson
* Mr V Barker	* Mr K C Casswell
* Mr M Rollinson	* Mr P Robinson
* Mr R Welberry	* Mr R Needham

Cllr C Rylott

* Member Present

In attendance: Mr D Withnall (Chief Executive)
Mr P Nicholson (Projects Director)
Mr S Harrison (Maintenance Director)
Mr M Smith (Waterlife Recovery Trust)

2274 Recording the meeting - Agenda Item 1

Board Members were informed that the meeting would be recorded.

2275 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 2

Apologies were received from Cllr C Rylott.

The Chairperson welcomed and introduced Malc Smith (guest from Waterlife Recovery Trust).

2276 Declarations of interest - Agenda Item 3

There were no declarations of interest.

2277 Minutes of the last meeting - Agenda Item 4

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Environment Committee held on the 7th March 2023, copies of which had been circulated, were considered. It was AGREED that they should be signed as a true record, with the following amendment:

- Minute 2107 – reference to '*gun* licence' should be '*general* licence'.

2278 Matters arising - Agenda Item 5

(a) Water Levels - Minute 2107

The Chairperson noted the reference to the lack of rainfall and drought conditions at the time of that meeting (March 2023) in comparison to the current conditions (large quantities of rainfall).

(b) Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) - Minute 2112(a)

It was noted that there have been no further reports of dead swans or birds. The Board received no feedback from Defra regarding the birds the Board reported as per the government guidelines.

2279 To review the Biodiversity Action Plan (Policy No. 11) - Agenda Item 6

The Chairperson introduced the Biodiversity Action Plan, noting that it is a dynamic document and that it is available to view on the Board's website.

The Maintenance Director noted that there are no proposed amendments.

Mr K Casswell questioned how many mink have been trapped? It was confirmed that 28 have been trapped, adding that there have been some issues experienced with the mink rafts floating away and sinking. The equipment has been recovered but will require extensive repair. Further noting that the proposed work with Waterlife Recovery Trust will be of great benefit, it being noted that two mink were caught over the past weekend (Helpringham and Hammond Beck). Control of mink was discussed further at minute 2284.

The Committee RESOLVED to recommend that the Biodiversity Action Plan (Policy No. 11) be approved at the next Board meeting.

2280 To receive a report on environmental work completed in 2023/24 and recommendations for proposed works for 2024/25 - Agenda Item 7

The Maintenance Director presented this agenda item, highlighting particular points as follows.

Completed Works 2023/24

Owl Boxes

The Board has purchased three new owl boxes. There has been a large decline in barn owl numbers. Mr W Ash noted that the water vole population can affect this. Reference was made to 87% of the barn owl boxes having Jackdaws present, Mr R Welberry questioning whether there is anything that can be done about this – culling or licenced traps? Mr M Rollinson noted that in order to prevent Jackdaws getting into an owl box, two doors are required (outside door on right hand side, inside door on left hand side). Jackdaws nest with long twigs and therefore can't get the twigs round the corner to build a nest. The Maintenance Director noted this and that he will look into the existing boxes being adapted.

Mr V Barker noted that he has also witnessed Buzzards taking barn owls as they fly along so sedately.

Early Flailing Works

The Board continue with early season bank flailing of high-profile watercourses and early health and safety cuts on main river highland carriers for the Environment Agency (EA).

Environmental Surveys of Larger Hedgerows in our Bushing Programme

It was noted that there has been difficulty in finding a consultant to conduct the Board's environmental surveys. Tim Smith, used by a neighbouring IDB, has conducted them this year, but is due to retire in the near future. The Board are currently advertising for an Environment & GIS Officer who will complete these surveys going forward.

Mr M Rollinson added that there is an app used for surveying hedgerows for the purpose of Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), suggesting this may be of some benefit. Mr M Rollinson noted that he will share the details with the Maintenance Director.

Operation Fly Swat

The Board continue being a partner with the Operation Fly Swat team. However, it was noted that the council won't collect rubbish from the Board depot unless a forklift is used to put it onto their truck. The Board therefore often recover from the drain and leave on the roadside for the council to collect from there.

Invasive Species

The workforce are reminded of the invasive species at the annual pre-cutting brief.

Bat Boxes and Surveys

There is still no activity in the Board's bat boxes.

Environmental Schemes

The Eel Screen Exemption period concludes in November 2024, it being expected that this will be extended again, as it has done previously.

Grass Snake Nesting Sites

No activity has been seen in the Board's Grass Snake Nesting Sites.

Wildflower Meadow

The area has been redressed again this year. It will be redressed again with a different type of seed if required. Previous seed has failed due to nitrate levels in the soil.

Badger Setts

The workforce follow Natural England guidelines when working adjacent to Badger Setts under a specific licence.

Pollution

There have been no reported pollution incidents.

Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership

The Maintenance Director attends the GLNP, noting that the last meeting was focused on carbon recovery.

South Lincs Pollinator Project

The Board continues with this at Kirton Marsh, noting that there has been no further contact from the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, who were leading the project, adding that he will follow this up.

Artificial House Martin Nests

The House Martins have shown interest in the nests and so it is hopeful that they may nest this year.

The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership

The Projects Director attends these meetings, noting that the current focus is on the Norfolk coastline.

The Environmental Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Boards

It was noted that this is a useful reference point for the Board.

Proposed works 2024/2025

Water Vole Surveys

Committee approval requested to continue using consultant Tim Smith for the Board's environmental surveys until successful recruitment of an Environment & GIS Officer. The vacancy is currently advertised, it has received interest, but from applicants that are more GIS based than environment based. It was confirmed that the Board are seeking a predominantly environmental based person, who could then be trained to complete the GIS element of work.

Winter Bushing and Cleansing

The Board are slightly behind on the programme due to recent rainfall events. A budget of £2,000 is proposed for fish relocation during cleansing.

Owl Boxes

A budget of £2,100 is proposed for the repair / replacement of three existing owl boxes. The Maintenance Director noted that, following previous conversation about stopping Jackdaws entering the boxes, this budget could go towards adaptation of the boxes.

Recording by Machine Drivers

The Board's machine drivers continue to record sightings on their Tom-Tom units, with a proposed budget of £1,700 for Tom-Tom repairs and updates in 2024/25.

It was confirmed that Otter sightings are recorded but is very rare that they are seen. It was added that a family of Otters have shown interest in the Board's Otter Halt.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

A new Invasive Non-Native Species was displayed on screen – the Chinese Mitten Crab. They have not been seen in the Board's catchment but are present in the Welland and Deepings IDB area. They burrow into the bank, effecting the stability of it. They eat anything and are found in both salt and fresh water. Welland and Deepings IDB are actively trying to catch them, within a day of putting out the trap in the weir, there were hundreds caught.

Operation Flyswat Partner

An estimated contribution of £4,000 has been budgeted, which outweighs the cost the Board would incur if carrying out the work.

Grass Snake Nesting Sites

Mr V Barker noted that with the increase in automatic weedscreen cleaners, there aren't the heaps of grass that have come out the watercourses and are therefore losing some potential nesting sites. The Maintenance Director noted that the Board could look at introducing more nesting sites, noting that Sempringham Pumping Station would lend itself well for this (sightings here previously).

Wildflower Meadow

If redressing is required, a budget of £700 has been allocated for this.

Pollinator Project

It was noted that previous discussion has taken place with the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust about when bank slips are repaired are redressed, pollinator seed can be used (in addition to grass, needed to stabilise the bank).

Environment Budget 2024/25

The big increase in budget for the Environmental & GIS Officer was noted (which will be charged 50% Environment and 50% GIS). This creates an overspend for 2024/25 of £13,598. Mr V Barker suggested targeting graduates.

The committee AGREED the budget as below:

Winter bushing & cleansing (fish relocation)	£ 2,000.00
Slip Repairs Pollinator Seed	£ 600.00
Barn Owl Box Replacements	£ 2,100.00
Tom Tom Repairs/Updates	£ 1,700.00
Mink Control	£ 2,600.00
Operation Fly swat partner	£ 4,000.00
Grass Snake Sites	£ 300.00
Wild Meadow Maintenance	£ 700.00
Pollinator Project	£ 875.00
WNNMP	£ 400.00
GLNP	£ 300.00
Environment & GIS Officer (new role 50%)	£24,023.00
Total	£39,598.00

The Chairperson thanked the Maintenance Director and team.

2281 To receive a report on Barn Owl Nesting Boxes for 2023 - Agenda Item 8

The Maintenance Director presented the Barn Owl Report for 2023. The Chairperson noted that A Ball, who completes the report, has conveyed his thanks for the Board's commitment to this project.

2282 To receive a report on the 2023 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly Conservation and Wildlife area, Amber Hill - Agenda Item 9

The Maintenance Director presented the 2023 butterfly records from Windmill Lodge Butterfly conservation and wildlife area at Amber Hill.

2283 To receive the 2024 Conservation surveys of watercourses - Agenda Item 10

The Maintenance Director presented the conservation surveys for the North Forty Foot Drain, Horbling Fen Drove Drain and Old Forty Foot (Horbling). It was noted that these reports are concise but are still compliant with what the Board are required to conduct. It is also a document that the workforce can easily refer to on site.

2284 To receive a report from Malc Smith (Waterlife Recovery Trust) - Agenda Item 12

The Chairperson introduced Mr Malc Smith from the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) to give a presentation on the eradication of mink.

Malc Smith gave an informative and interesting presentation as follows.

Waterlife Recovery East was the first of the charities to be set up (2018), which then changed to Waterlife Recovery Trust in 2022.

Work to date over the past three years has focused on the 'core area' (displayed on screen), highlighted in green (Norfolk and Suffolk). There were no juvenile mink caught in Norfolk and Suffolk in 2023. With only five adults caught in Suffolk and seven in Norfolk in 2023. It was noted that there was around 400-500 in the first year. This has been achieved through WRT mink trapping alongside other additional mink trapping. The Trust try to catch the mink whilst they are breeding (February – end of March) and then the dispersal later in the year (August). The Trust started with the Norfolk and Suffolk area because of the coastal area, which means there is not much immigration from the coast and other existing projects. Mr M Smith further noted that mink have been known to travel up to 70km over land.

Mr M Smith next showed the committee the 'buffer zone' (displayed on screen), highlighted in red (Cambridge). This area has been trapped by the Trust for 2.5 years now.

Mr M Smith next displayed the newest area taken on last year through Natural England funding (North of the Thames, London up to Lincoln).

Mr M Smith showed a map of all the traps deployed as at September 2023, with very few in Lincolnshire. A comparison map was displayed next, showing the traps deployed up to date. Mr M Rollinson noted the traps shown in isolated areas, with Mr M Smith noting that some people show an interest and request a trap in their area.

Mr R Welberry noted his surprise that there aren't more traps in the Newark area. Mr M Smith noted that the funding only takes the Trust area up to Lincoln. Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust and South Yorkshire Wildlife Trust have each got 100 traps to deploy in addition to the Trust's work.

Since autumn 2023, the Trust have deployed 320 rafts, with 166 mink caught so far. The data showing the number of mink caught annually was shared as below:

County	Mink captures 2024 to date
Argle & Bute	9
Beds	24
Berks	2
Cambridgeshire	4
East Sussex	2
Essex	9
Greater London	1
Kent	9
Leicester	3
Lincolnshire	69
Northants	12
Nottinghamshire	9
Oxford	1
Rutland	4
Staffs	1
Surrey	1
West Sussex	2
West Yorks	4
Total 2024 to date	166
Mink captures 2023	588
Mink Captures 2022	241
Mink Captures 2021	362
4 Year Grand Total	1327 to date

Once the mink has been caught, it is shot, bagged and stored in a freezer for preservation. The mink is then analysed using the following methods:

- Weighed and measured
- Look for distinctive features
- DNA Sample Analysis (Cambridge University)
- Muzzle removed to extract teeth to identify age (Cambridge University & America) (mink live up to 7 years old)
- Female fertility analysis
- Anal gland extraction (scent used in traps to attract mink)
- Remaining body is used as food for local raptors

Mr M Smith next showed maps showing the different DNA data of mink in various locations. Mr P Robinson noted that historically there was a mink farm in New York which was sabotaged, and the mink released. It was noted around how far some of the same DNA strands are apart, therefore, noting the distance travelled.

Mr V Barker noted the DNA work done on squirrels to make them only produce males, questioning whether the same should be considered for mink? Mr M Smith noted that the aim for mink is eradication, not control, as it is with squirrels.

Mr M Smith explained about the Remoti traps themselves, noting that they send an email / text notification if there are any issues i.e., turned over or if a mink has been trapped, therefore they do not need constant monitoring. All traps use scent glands to attract the mink and is replaced after three months. If a mink is caught in a trap, then that mink will have left a scent in the trap and so a new lure is not required.

Mr M Smith continued by explaining how the Board can help. The equipment is free, it is information that is key. Mink can be reported through the Waterlife Recovery Trust website or ringing. Any mink recovery is wanted i.e., trapping or roadkill so that the body can be analysed. It was noted that this information has been included in the Rating Brochure.

Mr M Smith also noted that the Trust are looking for volunteers to host a raft (2 volunteers per raft). The aim is to deploy 24 traps in the Board's area. There are freezers for the mink at the Board's depot, Welland & Deepings IDB, North Level IDB. As previously noted, it does not require constant monitoring, as any errors or trapping will be made known to the volunteers by an email / text notification. The Trust will set up the trap and provide training. If a non-target species gets trapped, they are released. It was noted that the traps don't have to be on water and have been dug into banks previously, but generally, mink use water as highways.

Mr M Smith provided his contact details, as below, for anybody interested in hosting a raft to get in touch about. The Chairperson and Mr M Rollinson noted their interest.

Mr M Smith - WRT Project Manager
07778768965 malc.smith@waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk
www.waterliferecoverytrust.org.uk

The Chairperson questioned that if there are Moorhens present, does this indicate that mink are not present? Mr M Smith noted that this is not an accurate indicator of whether there are mink or not.

Mr M Smith referred to four traps in a one-mile radius in the Langtoft area, and that 27 mink have been caught in those traps.

The importance of educating the public and the reasoning for the eradication was noted.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the committee, thanked Mr M Smith for his informative and interesting presentation.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 15:10.

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - 04 MARCH 2025

AGENDA ITEM 07(a)

PROGRESS UPDATE - BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

Section 5.2 Habitat Action Plans

5.2.1 Hedgerows

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Ensure that compensation planting takes place if any hedges are removed. To provide enhancement by being a wider species mix.	Length in m of hedges removed and hedges planted	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowners
2	Prevent damage to existing hedges (does not preclude management to allow watercourse maintenance, including coppicing).	Intact hedgerow in m this year compared to last	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner
3	Identify location and plant 0.5 km hedgerow over 5 years.	Length of new hedgerow (m) each year	April 2025	Ecologist	Landowner
4	Avoid trimming hedgerows between 1 March and 31 July (the main nesting season for birds)	Annual reports	Ongoing	IDB Ops	Landowner

Work to be completed 2025-26

3 - Feasibility and cost of planting 0.5km hedgerow is high and not in the budget for 2025/26. The board has not destroyed any hedgerows in the last 5 years so we can re-evaluate this action within the BAP. We can look into a smaller scale option or planting some hedgerows at select pumping stations. It is proposed to include a new action for hedgerows in the new, 2026 BAP.

5.2.2 Reedbeds and Drainage Ditches

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain the existing marginal fringes of vegetation of at least 45 - 60cm wide (approx.)* along at least one side of all drainage ditches where flood risk allows. *Width of vegetation fringe is dependent upon flood risk category and drainage ditch width. Where a wider channel allows a wider fringe then establish, where flood risk prevents, act accordingly. Use drainage channel biodiversity manual as a guide.	Length of marginal fringe extent in m maintained each year where flood risk allows.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Identify ditches suitable to allow a continuous marginal fringe of vegetation at least 45 - 60cm wide (approx.) or more along at least one side of the ditch.* In areas identified, plant with suitable plugs, install coir rolls or allow colonisation naturally.	Establishment/colonisation of new marginal vegetation in m each year	31/12/2025	Ops Lead	Ecologist
3	Identify ditches which are too narrow for a continuous vegetation fringe to be installed, but where occasional patches of vegetation fringes can be encouraged. Plant with suitable plugs, install coir rolls or allow colonization naturally.	Length of occasional marginal vegetation patches established in m	31/12/2025	Ops Lead	Ecologist
4	Install marginal plant ledges during bank re-profiling and plant with sedge plugs or coir rolls	Length in m of plant ledge created each year	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Ecologist
5	Alternate bank side cutting each year where risk allows. Mowing to take place between August and April to avoid bird nesting season. 45 - 60cm or more from toe of bank to be left unmown on ditches where risk and ditch profile allows.	Increased extent of uncut ditch bank	Ongoing	Ops lead	Ecologist
6	Remove bank-side cuttings where possible (with conveyor) to encourage sward diversity. Survey to identify diversity baseline and diversity following cuttings removal.	Survey highlights increased sward diversity after 5 years.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a
7	Establish a pollen-rich sward following bank re-profiling	Floristic species present in bank sward.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Ecologist

Work completed 2021-2024

5 - We continue to alternate bank side cutting, and avoid the main bird nesting season by cutting August-April. We need to assess how often we are leaving toe of the bank uncut, and re-iterate to the workforce to do this.

5.2.3 Wet Woodland

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Identify and map the extent and condition of wet woodland within the catchment.	Number of areas and area size. GIS layer	31/12/2025	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Ensure the maintenance programmes cause no harm to existing wet woodland.	No net loss	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
3	Monitor wet woodland and manage it effectively to prevent the area drying out.	No net loss	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
4	Consider options to help landowners maintain/restore wet woodland.	Number of areas and area size. GIS layer	On going	Ops Lead	LWT

Work to be completed 2025-26

1 - Wet woodland, if any, will be low within the catchment, but the environment officer will identify and map before the deadline.

Section 5.3 Species Action Plans

5.3.1 Bank and Reed Nesting Birds

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Investigate methods for monitoring and recording various species throughout the catchments.	Records, GIS layers	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologist

Work completed 2021-2024

- 1- Environment officer has begun building a database of birds in the catchment. Data is recorded on the Birda app whenever on site or conducting a survey. Data is then transferred into an excel spreadsheet and will eventually be mapped. It will take a few years to build a comprehensive database.

5.3.2 Bats

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Investigate methods for monitoring/survey works at select pumping station sites.	Surveys, annual report	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Erect roosting boxes on Board buildings.	GIS Layer, annual report	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologists
3	Locate and protect roosts used by bats.	Surveys	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologists
4	Monitor and survey bat species, numbers, and locations.	Surveys	On going	Ops Lead	Ecologists

Work completed 2021-2024

1. Budget has been approved for 2025/26 to purchase bat survey equipment, which will be used by the Environment Officer to identify bat activity at the boards pumping stations.

2. Bat boxes have previously been erected onto most pumping stations, but it has been requested that we re-evaluate this over concern for potential disruptions to future works, as bat mitigation can be very difficult.

4. Bat surveys have been conducted on two pumping stations in 2024 (Ewerby, Damford) by environment officer and Tim Smith. Data is shared with LERC.

Work to be completed 2025-26

4. Surveying and monitoring of bat populations at board pumping stations will continue from May 2025 once equipment has been purchased.

5.3.3 Water Vole

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Control American mink	Number of mink caught	Annually	Ops Lead	n/a
2	Work with GLNP on mink task group to monitor county water vole and mink populations.	GLNPs annual reports indicating number and results of surveys. Extent of water vole population.	Annually	Ops Lead	Ecologist/ GLNP
3	Continue yearly recording by operational staff.	Number and location records collected and submitted to local biodiversity records office.	Annually	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

1. We continue to partner with Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) on the mink eradication project, with rafts deployed throughout the catchment. The board does not monitor many rafts internally now, with WRT and external volunteers attending to alerts.

Work to be completed 2025-26

1/3. Environment officer is going to begin mapping mink in the black sluice catchment using WRT data and can then report on numbers of mink caught.

5.3.4 Kingfisher

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain and avoid disturbance to potential nest sites by retaining earth cliffs and avoiding close working.	Number and extent of earth cliffs in m each year. Work schedules detail exclusion zone around known nest sites in the breeding season.	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
2	During replacement of pumping station create artificial kingfisher hole	New Kingfisher nesting hole to be present, GIS layer	On going	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

A new nest site has been created in Rippingale in January 2025. With support from the landowner, who provided some materials, 3 artificial kingfisher nests were installed into a bank reprofile.

Work to be completed 2025-26

Installing artificial nests into a bank reprofile was an easy way to support kingfishers. This method can be carried over and used in the new 2026 BAP, and we can budget for some more installs.

5.3.5 Barn Owl

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	To increase nesting opportunities on land managed by the Board.	GIS Layer	Annually	Ops Lead	Hawk & Owl Trust
2	Maintain and renew nesting boxes at Pumping stations and pole sights.	Annual reports	Annually	Ops Lead	Hawk & Owl Trust

3	Monitor the use of the boxes, ring and record fledglings.	Annual reports	Annually	Ops Lead	Hawk & Owl Trust
4	Maintain areas of marginal vegetation around pumping stations and drains	GIS Layer	Annually	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

1. Three new nest boxes have been installed (Ewerby, Damford, South Kyme) as mitigation whilst the original boxes close for 2025. Once works are complete, the original boxes will re-open, and the three new boxes will remain.
2. We receive recommendations for box replacements each year from Alan Ball (our owl partner). Per recommendations, in February 2025 we replaced an old, damaged box and pole on Holland Fen, and replaced a box at Maryland.
3. Alan Ball records all data for the board and conducts 2 checks per season at all nests.

Work to be completed 2025-26

1. Environment officer will create a GIS layer of all nest boxes and known locations of nesting owls
3. The Board's Environment Officer will now partner with Alan Ball, conducting box checks twice annually with him. Annual reports will continue to be shared with the Environment Officer.

5.3.6 Eel

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain the current range of eels within the Board's area through effective watercourse management.	Annual reports	Annually	Ops Lead	Ecologist
2	Install and maintain suitably approved Eel passes where necessary.	GIS layer	Annually	Ops Lead	Ecologist/ EA

Work to be completed 2025-26

- 1-2. The board needs to come up with mitigation plans for eel screen installations at EA category A pumping stations within the next 12 months.

5.3.7 Otter

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Maintain habitat suitable for otter within the Board's area	Annual maintenance works	On going	Ops Lead	n/a
2	Record sighting by the Board's workforce	GIS layer	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a
3	Construct an Otter holt and maintain	Annual maintenance/inspection	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

2. The workforce have never previously recorded otter sightings. Environment officer has recently added Otter to Tom-Tom vehicle trackers and provided them with educational materials on what field signs to look for, with a hope to begin building a GIS layer in 2025/26. Environment officer has begun collecting data on otter locations from surveys.

Work to be completed 2025-26

2-3. The Environment Officer will continue to survey the catchment for otters and plot them on a GIS layer and will inspect and monitor a previously created artificial holt, looking for signs of use.

5.3.8 Grass Snake

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Create egg laying/hibernation stations throughout the Board's area.	GIS layer, annual maintenance	Ongoing	Ops Lead	n/a

Work completed 2021-2024

1. Two new artificial stations at Wyberton Marsh and Chain Bridge. One at Kirton Marsh was discovered to have been destroyed in 2024.

Work to be completed 2025-26

1. Re-build Kirton Marsh Pumping Station and select sites for 2 new nests at pumping stations.
1. Surveys will be undertaken in 2025 breeding season around pumping stations to try and map breeding sites. Snakes are likely to lay eggs in weed piles collected from stations. Select stations with low flood risk will be considered for leaving piles for longer for egg laying. GIS layer will be created in 2025 to start mapping breeding locations.

5.3.9 Butterfly and Moth

Objective ref.	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Co-ordinate lite touch essential maintenance with Butterfly Garden managers.	Annual reports from Butterfly Gardens.	Ongoing	Ops Lead	Butterfly Garden Managers (e.g., Amber Hill Butterfly Garden)

Work completed 2021-2024

1. 2024 report has been received from Amber Hill. The bank at the butterfly garden was not cut in 2024, which was pulled up by Phil, who requested a cut in 2025. It was not cut due to alternate bank cutting, but it seems they will request for a cut on their bank every year.

Work to be completed 2025-26

1. A meeting with Phil from Amber Hill is planned for spring 2025 with a site visit, to review the boards management and if there are any further opportunities for supporting butterflies.

Section 6 Procedural Action Plan

6.3 Procedural Action Plan

Target Reference	Action	Measurable / Indicators	Completion date	Action Lead	Partners
1	Ensure all staff including contractors have received high-level biodiversity training within 6 months from the start date of this Plan, or as part of their induction, and refresher training provided every 3 years.	Numbers of staff trained	Ongoing	Ecologist	
2	Produce a manual of best practice within 12 months from the date of this plan.	Publication of manual on website	June 2022	Ecologist	NE/ WT
3	Develop and deliver 12 habitat and species-specific toolbox talks, to be delivered 1 per quarter per year	Delivery of 12 toolbox talks	Ongoing	Ecologist	WT
4	Respond to applications for culverts with alternatives to maintain open watercourses. Approve no new long culvert applications.	Extent of open watercourses maintained.	Ongoing	CEO	LA's
5	Identify areas for limited maintenance	Develop the idea with the works Committees	Ongoing	Ops Team	

Work completed 2021-2024

Work to be completed 2025-26

1. Training to be provided on the new biosecurity policy and protocol to any staff who work in the field – aiming for April/May 2025.
3. Training / TBT planned on working around badgers, and working around water voles for 2025.

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING - 04 MARCH 2025

AGENDA ITEM 08

REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL WORKS

Completed Works in 2024/25

1. Owl Boxes

Three new barn owl boxes mounted on poles have been installed (Damford Grounds, Ewerby, South Kyme). The install was necessary mitigation for upcoming embankment repair projects, as the existing boxes mounted on the pumping stations have been closed for the season. It is planned to keep the boxes once the project is complete, therefore we have gained 3 new nest boxes. The total number of barn owl boxes now in the boards area is 38.

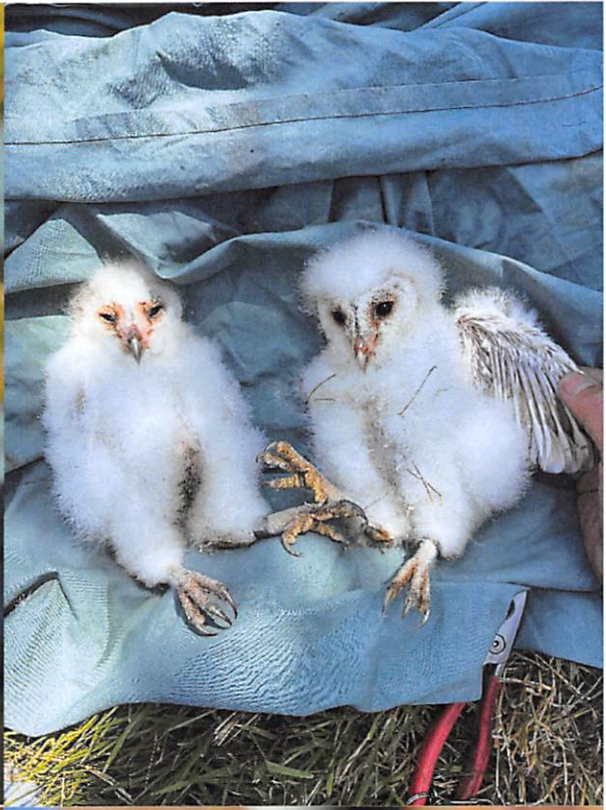
Necessary repairs have been made to existing boxes. A box has been replaced on Holland Fen, and a box and pole have been replaced at Maryland.

The completed 2024 Wildlife Conservation Partnership Barn Owl Box Report is included in Agenda Item 9.

2024 was a much better season than 2023. Box occupancy was very good, but brood sizes were still poor. It is estimated that this is due to reduced food supply (voles) following the flooding over winter and early 2024.

25 out of 35 nest boxes were used this season. Barn owls were present in 11 (44%), and Kestrels in 5 (20%). Jackdaws nested in 14 out of the 25 boxes (56%), which is an improvement on last years 86% occupancy. The season saw the hatching of 23 barn owl chicks and 8 Kestrel chicks. Photos can be found in the back of the agenda.

There has been on-going past concern regarding jackdaws using owl nest boxes and adaptations that can be made to prevent this, however we have decided to not move forward with making box amendments to any old style boxes we own. Jackdaws are intelligent and adaptable, and they have already been observed to utilise new style nest boxes that are created to prevent them nesting (zig-zag entrance and exit to prevent nesting), by simply creating two separate nests rather than one. Our owl expert, Alan Ball, has reassured that jackdaws are not stopping barn owls using the nest boxes, and that if a barn owl wants the nest box, it will simply take it from the jackdaw as the stronger predator in the equation.



2. Early Flailing Works

Early season bank flailing on our high-profile watercourses (approximately 67km) was completed along with the early season full cuts on the main river highland carriers (which has now replaced the Health & Safety cuts) for the Environment Agency (EA) through our Public Sector Co-Operation Agreement (PSCA).

Our pumping station grounds maintenance cuts commence in March each year until the end of the growing season.

3. Control of Mink

The Board continues to partner with the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT) on the mink eradication project. The aim of the partnership is to enhance water vole conservation within the Board's catchment, contributing towards the BAP.

The boards 2023/2024 budget for the upkeep and monitoring of mink rafts was £2600, which has been reduced to £1600 for 2025/25 due to less responsibility moving forward. WRT continues to provide the board with some 'Remoti' smart satellite rafts, but most of the alerts are responded to by WRT themselves, landowners, and external volunteers.

We are continuing our collaboration with the GLNP mink strategy committee, and we will continue to share information.



4. RSPB Water Abstraction for Frampton Marsh

Permission has again been granted by the EA and the Board for the RSPB to abstract 500,000m³ of water per annum from the Wyberton Marsh pump drain to assist with water management levels in the nearby Frampton Marsh Nature Reserve. Although an application to change this has been submitted.

An estimated 50% of this water volume re-enters the Wyberton Marsh pump drain after 'flushing' the Frampton Marsh Nature Reserve.

5. Operation Fly Swat

The Board remains a partner within the Operation Fly Swat team and contributes towards its running costs, which in turn offers financial benefits to the Board in relation to the amount the Board previously spent on fly tipping clearance, collection and disposal. The number of reported fly tipping incidents that the Board has attended has significantly increased. Consideration is now being given as to whether the Board are getting value from the partnership.

6. Invasive Species

New and easier to read non-native invasive species ID guides have been created by the Environment Officer to replace the currently used GLNP ones, coinciding with the creation and on-going implementation of the biosecurity protocol.

7. Bat Boxes and Surveys

It is not currently thought that any bat boxes on the boards pumping stations are occupied by bats, but surveys will be conducted on all boxes this season.

Consideration is being made to remove all bat boxes from pumping stations to prevent difficult interference with potential future works. If boxes are removed, alternative options for supporting bats will be explored in some locations, e.g., installing boxes on nearby trees instead.

Four bat boxes have currently been removed (Damford, Ewerby, South Kyme, Trinity College) as mitigation for upcoming embankment repair works.

8. Eel Screens

The boards previous exemption notices for EA category A classification pumping stations (Chain Bridge, Black Hole Drove, Cooks Lock, Donington Wykes, Donington North Igns, Gosberton, Great Hale, Holland Fen, South Kyme, Swineshead, and Wyberton Marsh) expired on 01/11/2024. Exemptions have been renewed, with new expiry dates ranging from 2028 to 2038.

The terms of the new exemptions are subject to the following regulations:

- The board must liaise with the Area Fisheries Officer to enable application of the Eels Regulations regulatory assessment process and determine the requisite eel measure for each pumping station by 31 October 2025.
- To board must deliver the requisite eel measure by the specific expiry date for each pumping station, and in accordance with Clause 13 Annex 2 of the Grant Funding Agreement for project number AT1-023.

9. Grass Snake Nesting Sites

The board has previously had three artificial snake nesting sites, at Chain Bridge, Dunsby and Kirton Marsh. The nest at Kirton Marsh was discovered to be destroyed this year and is no longer in action. It is not currently known if these sites are used for breeding, but the environment officer will monitor this moving forward.

10. Wildflower Meadow

The established area alongside the North Forty Foot Drain north of Cooks Lock Pumping Station totalling approximately 2,000m² is being managed as a Wildflower Meadow.

11. Bug Hotel

The Bug Hotels at our Swineshead office/depot have been maintained throughout the year.



12. Badger Setts

From a conveyancing point of view Badger setts within banks continue to be a problem, especially so in raised main riverbanks where high fluvial flows could wash through the setts resulting in bank failures and breaches.

We continue to follow Natural England guidelines when working adjacent to Badger setts with all our site-based employees maintaining Natural England licenses to work within the proximity of Badgers.

On the 14th March 2024, while carrying out maintenance works in one of our maintained drains, one of our excavator operators was visited by two Rural Police officers following a report by a member of the public that we had destroyed an active badger sett. This was not found to be correct and following a consultation with Natural England and the Police no further criminal action was taken against the Board. Although the operative did get a warning from Natural England for not carrying his licence.

13. Pollution Incidents

The Board have not attended any sites where potential pollution incidents could have a detrimental effect on water quality and/or the general environment in order to reduce any potential pollution/contamination issues.

We involve the Environment Agency and seek recovery of costs for all resources employed on such sites.

We continue with Pollution Liability Insurance for £2m of cover per claim.

14. Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership (GLNP) & Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

As in previous years the Board (as do all Lincolnshire IDB's) continued with our Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the GLNP and attend their annual conference. The cost of our partnership with GLNP is £520.

The Lincolnshire Environment Records Centre (LERC) data is included within our SLA, this enables us to check the ecological data from within and around our catchment. The complete LERC data collection holds over 15 million sightings.

The Board's membership fee to Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust is £300 annually.

15. South Lincs Pollinator Project

We are involved with other IDB's and organisations (LWT, EA) to promote suitable banks as pollinator sites, we have selected the southern bank of the Kirton Marsh drain running up to the pumping station.

To date we are still awaiting the botanical survey works and advice that had been offered by experts before and after enhancement, once confirmation of establishment is confirmed we will continue to manage accordingly and be guided by the experts.

16. Artificial House Martin Nests.

The House Martin is part of the hirundines family (swallows, swifts, martins) and is in decline in the UK. The Board are in a unique position to help the House Martin as one of the problems is a lack of suitable nesting sites and the fact their mud-based nests tend to fall off the walls they attach them to in dry weather.

Helpringham and Quadring Fen Pumping Stations have House Martin nests installed. It is not currently known if these are used, but the environment officer will continue to monitor them over the next year.



17. Artificial Kingfisher Nests

Three artificial kingfisher nests have been installed into a bank reprofile in Rippingale. Working with the farmer and Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust, we installed artificial nests made out of ICB containers and pipe, filled with sand and gravel. The watercourse is a popular feeding site for kingfishers and was therefore considered an excellent site to trial this project.

The Environment Officer will continue to monitor this site over the next few years to determine whether the nests become inhabited by kingfishers or not.



18. The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP).

We continue to be an advisory member of the partnership focusing on marine restoration and recovery and regularly attend the full partnership and Boston Advisory Group meetings. The cost of the partnership is £400.

19. The Environmental Good Governance Guide for Internal Drainage Boards

This detailed guide was published by ADA in October 2022 and offers guidance and codes of practice to activities undertaken by IDB's. Our Operations Team will be integrating these best practices into our everyday workplace.

- DUTY
- BEST PRACTICE
- GOING FURTHER
- KEY RESOURCES

Copies are available upon request.

Proposed Works and Environmental Involvement in 2025/26

1. Biodiversity Surveys

Following the appointment of an Environment Officer, the services of Tim Smith will no longer be used. The Environment Officer will continue with biodiversity surveys in 2025/26, primarily focussing on water voles and otters to help map their distribution within the Board's drainage network. Badger, bird and other species surveys will continue as and when required, ahead of works such as desilting and the cutting season.





2. Winter Bushing and Cleansing

Bushing works will commence in November along with the cleansing works, all bushes will be chipped onsite, all excavated silt will be deposited on adjacent fields, left to dry then spread and levelled across the adjacent land.

Where required, water levels will be lowered by damming lengths of the water course and the water over-pumped, if fish are evident, they will be carefully removed whilst the water is being lowered and transferred over the dams.

We have our own bushing budget outside of the Environment budget, fish relocation whilst cleansing is budgeted at £2,000.

3. Summer Cutting and Vegetation Clearance

An alternate maintenance programme continues to be followed, and flail mowing will commence on priority watercourses in early April, the banks being cut every 4 weeks. Early flail mowing is necessary to prevent ground nesting birds. As with the high priority sites these watercourses can then be maintained at an earlier stage than previously. Therefore, the main summer cutting programme will still commence the first week of August. The workforce will be presented with a 'Summer Cutting Brief' which will cover channel management in relation to balancing the benefits of flood risk management, agriculture, and the biodiversity values. The workforce will continue to conduct 'walk over' surveys and the environment officer will also be used for bird surveys.

Where birds' nests are encountered, a minimum 10m length of bank will be left un-cut (5m each side of the nest) in line with the legislation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Conducting pre-cut bird surveys can be made more efficient in the future by using a thermal drone to easily detect possible locations of bird nests, and reduce the cost and time involved with walk over surveys. The cost of a thermal drone starts from approximately £4,000 so this is something that could be considered in the budget in future years.

4. Owl Boxes

A budget of £2,100 for repairing/replacing any existing boxes during 2025/26 has been set. Opportunities will be sought for land that any new installs can be made in winter 25/26 to increase the number of nests.

Historically the nest boxes are cleaned out every winter, but moving forward this will change to every 2/3 years for boxes containing barn owls. Boxes containing other species, e.g., jackdaws will continue to be cleaned annually.

The boxes are purchased at £245.00 each including delivery from the Wildlife Conversation Partnership.

5. Recording by Machine Drivers

The eight machine drivers will continue to record sightings on the Tom-Tom units; environmental sightings such as badger or fox holes in banks, water vole, mink and other specialist environmental sighting will be recorded. A new code for otter has been added to trackers and drivers have received educational materials on otter field signs, and encouraged to report this so the Environment Officer can investigate and map. A map showing badger and water voles is shown on page 34.

All sighting information is passed onto the GLNP and in turn to the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC).

Budget request of £1,700 for Tom-Tom repairs/updates.

6. Water Levels

Water levels will continue to be controlled via the Boards 34 pumping stations and/or the gravity channels associated with them.

The South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) water levels were raised to their summer levels by the EA in late March and will be lowered back to winter levels in November, this obviously affects the gravity flows from the catchments into the SFFD. Water levels within the catchments will be held back where requested, this will help to enhance the aquatic biodiversity associated with the watercourses and along the banks.

7. Invasive Non- Native Species (INNS) and Biosecurity

The identification and eradication of INNS is important for the protection of our native species. INNS are expanding their population and geographical area, often to the detriment of native species. Early identification of INNS is critical in the control of their spread, we will continue with help from the GLNP to implement identification training for our workforce to help achieve early identification and assist with removal.

The workforce will receive training on invasive species and biosecurity once the policy has been approved and all equipment is purchased, which has been budgeted for £400.

INNS locations will be reported to the GLNP to help determine population trends and distribution.

We propose to continue with our mink control project with the aim to enhance water vole conservation and also to use as a contribution towards the Board's BAP. This will compliment other efforts from surrounding IDB's.

8. Operation Fly Swat Partner

Approval is sought to continue being a partner with this scheme into 2024/25.

We estimate a contribution of £4,000 as a partner contribution which far outweighs the collection, removal and tipping fees the Board would incur if we carried out all this work ourselves.

9. Grass Snake Nesting Sites

The budget for grass snake nesting sites has increased from £300 in 2023/24 to £800 for 2025/26 with plans to create and install 2 new artificial nests within the boards catchment. Site selection is on-going. Repairing the destroyed nest at Kirton Marsh will also be evaluated. Existing grass snake nest sites will be inspected and replenished with materials where required.

10. Wildflower Meadow

The Environment Officer met with Boston Seed in February 2025 to create a plan for establishing a wildflower meadow at Cooks Lock Pumping Station. The preparation of the land is to begin in April 2025. Budget for maintenance £700.

11. Pollinator Project

We are involved with the Pollinator Project which is being organised by Lincolnshire Wildlife trust. There are 4 IDB's involved, each has a site that has been identified by the trust to introduce pollinator species. The Board's site is Kirton Marsh Pump drain. Budget £875.

12. The Wash and North Norfolk Marine Partnership (WNNMP)

Being a partner (c£400 per annum) we have a statutory duty under the UK Habitats Regulations to report on progress against the management actions on an annual basis, and the information is presented in the Action Plan.

We report on subjects such as land drainage, shoreline management (if applicable), coastal oil spills, water framework directives, chemical weed control, non-native invasive species and water abstraction.

13. Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

The Board adopted our BAP as one of its policies on the 3rd March 2021 and is committed to its implementation, we will periodically review and update it as appropriate. The existing BAP expires in March 2026, therefore a full detailed review of the BAP will be conducted.

Please review our BAP on our web site at www.blacksluiceidb.gov.uk and bring any suggestions back to this committee.

ADA have published an Environmental Good Governance Guide for IDB Board members to help those who sit on the Boards to have greater confidence in their role towards the environment.

14. Environmental Training

Now the board has employed an Environment Officer, environmental training for the workforce will be undertaken this year to align with the goals set out in the BAP.

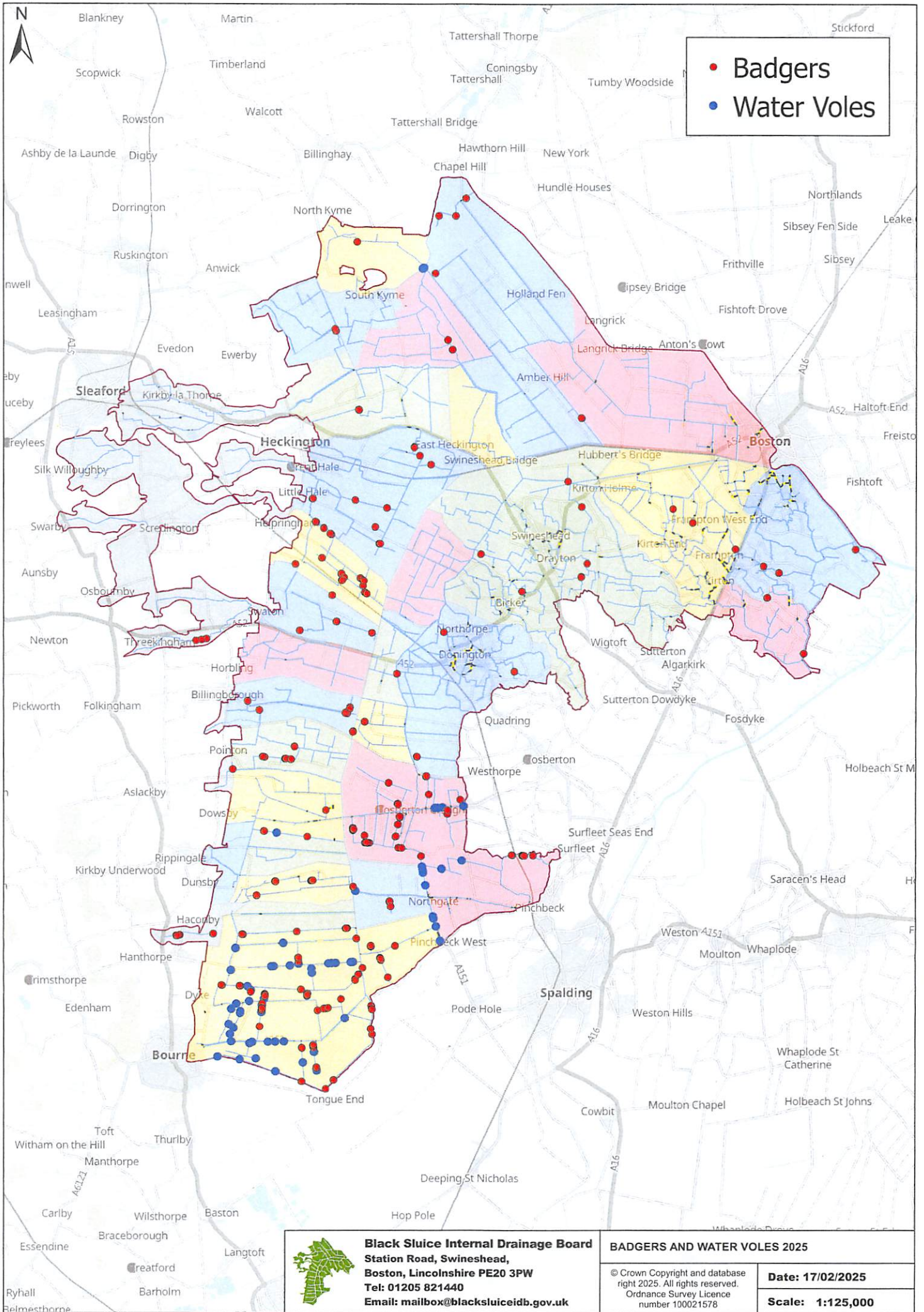
Three training sessions are planned for 2025/26, with topics:

- Invasive species and biosecurity protocol
- Working around badgers
- Working around water voles

15. Total budget allocation:-

Environmental and GIS Officer	£	25,879
Operation Fly swat partner	£	4,000
Fly Swat Labour & Plant	£	4,000
Fish Relocation for Winter Cleansing	£	2,000
Barn Owl Box Replacements	£	2,100
Tom Tom Repairs/Updates	£	1,700
Mink Control	£	1,600
Hedgerow Planting (BAP)	£	1,400
Grass Snake Sites	£	800
Wild Meadow Maintenance	£	700
Bat Survey Equipment	£	675
Pollinator Project	£	875
Slip Repairs Pollinator Seed	£	600
Training Courses	£	500
Biosecurity Decontamination Kits	£	400
Wildlife Camera Traps	£	400
WNNMP	£	400
GLNP	£	520
Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust	£	300

£ 48,849



Annual Check of Black Sluice IDB nest boxes –2024

Boxes checked by Alan Ball on dates shown

Wildlife
Conservation
Partnership



Box	IPMR	Grid Ref	Location	Type	Date		Con
3290		TF154188	Richardson's Borrow Pit, Twenty	Pole		n/c	
3291		TF173211	Gandy's Borrow Pit, Twenty	Pole		n/c	
3292		TF138195	Cook's Borrow Pit, Bourne N.Fen	Pole		n/c	
1365	DYF	TF152227	Dyke Fen Pump	Pump	14/06 29/07	BARN OWL – 3 chicks GY70827/28 & GE07756, Ad female = r/GV13790 KESTREL – in top 3 chicks EM86433 – 35 Ad female = EM86431	
1366	RSI	TF167251	West Pinchbeck (Black Hole Dr)	Pump	30/06	Jackdaw - fledged	
1367	RSI	TF166257	Haconby Fen Pump	Pump	02/06 30/06	BARN OWL – 3 tiny chicks, female = GY70720 2 chicks ringed GY62929 & 30	
1368	RSI	TF166266	West Pinchbeck (Starlode Drove)	Pump	02/06	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM08971 & 72	
1369	RSJ	TF165271	Dunsby Fen Pump	Pump	30/06	Jackdaw - fledged	
1370	RSJ	TF164279	Rippingale Fen Pump	Pump	04/05	BARN OWL – 3 tiny chicks (failed 21/06)	
1371	BFF	TF162284	Dowsby Lode Pump	Pump		n/c	
1372	DOF	TF167294	Gosberton Pump	Pump		n/c	
1373	RSQ	TF164318	Neslam Fen Pump	Pump		n/c	
1374	RSV	TF168331	Quadring Fen Pump	Pump	21/05	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM08950 & 51	
1375	RSV	TF168333	Billingborough Fen Pump	Pump	05/06	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM86016 & 17	
1376	RSG	TF170346	Horbling Fen Pump	Pump	05/06	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM86010 & 11 KESTREL – in top – failed on 3 eggs	
1377	RST	TF174364	Swaton Fen Pump	Pump	05/06	Jackdaw – 3 chicks EM86004 - 06	
1378	RST	TF176370	Donington Ing Pump	Pump		n/c	
1379	RST	TF177375	Helpringham Fen Pump	Pump	26/06	BARN OWL – 3 chicks GY70975 - 77	
1380	RSH	TF186397	Bicker Fen Pump	Pump	31/05	Jackdaw - fledged	
1381	RSU	TF206425	Great Hale Pump	Pump	29/07	BARN OWL – fledged (gravel added to top)	
1383	HKF	TF185466	Heckington Pump	Pump	16/06	BARN OWL – 3 chicks GY70842 - 44	
1384	SKF	TF207469	South Kyme Pump	Pump	16/06	Jackdaw - fledged	
1385	EWV	TF159484	Ewerby Pump	Pump	29/06	BARN OWL – 3 chicks GY62926 – 28 KESTREL – in top – 5 chicks EM86390 - 94	

1386	SKG	TF194507	Damford Grounds Pump	Pump	16/06	Jackdaw - fledged KESTREL – in top – failed on 4 eggs	
2973	PAH	TF192484	South Kyme (Paddington House)	Pole	16/06	BARN OWL – 3 chicks GY70839 - 41	
2802	BSG	TF236477	Gill Bridge (Barry Hall)	Pole	16/06	BARN OWL – 1 chick GY70838, ad fem = r/GY13395	
2803	BSH	TF205529	Hart's Grounds (Andrew Means)	Pole	16/06	Barn Owl roost only	
2804	BSM	TF204484	Maryland (Pocklington Bros)	Pole		Box gone – needs new box fitted to existing pole	
3169	KSK	TF341370	Kirton Skeldyke	Pole	27/05	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM08931 & 32	
3165	BFK	TF340359	Kirton Bucklegate	Pole		n/c	
3170	KME	TF281388	Kirton Meeres - Pick's Barn	Pole	27/05	Jackdaw – 2 chicks EM08922 & 23	
2969	BST	TF248464	Holland Fen (Two Hundred Fm)	Pole	16/06 16/06 29/07	KESTREL – in top – failed on 2 eggs BARN OWL – 2 tiny chicks & 1 egg Barn Owl failed, now Stock Dove – 2 chicks EM86436&37 Box needs replacing on new pole	
2971		TF199521	Chapel House (ex Bridge House)	Pole		n/c	
1387	WYB	TF359400	Wyberton Marsh Pump	Pump	19/06	Jackdaw - fledged	
1388	KIR	TF343350	Kirton Marsh Pump	Pump	27/05	Jackdaw – 2 nests, 7 chicks EM08933 – 39	

Retrap Barn Owl data.

GV13790 caught as breeding female at Dyke Pump – ringed as chick at Deeping St Nicholas on 16/06/2019 – movement 9km NW

GY13395 caught as breeding female at Gill Bridge – ringed as breeding female at Two Hundred Fen in 2021 -movement 1 km

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - 04 MARCH 2025

AGENDA ITEM 10

2024 Butterfly Report – Amber Hill Home for Butterflies

I am sure that you will be aware that Butterfly Conservation have declared a butterfly emergency, following what has officially been declared for 2024 to be by far the worst butterfly season in living memory, and certainly since their records began in 1976. Our garden records have mirrored the national decline, and the emphasis has been to concentrate on protecting their individual needs to the best of our abilities, being as there is precious little we can do about the weather. For it is the weather that is undoubtedly at the core of the problem, the problem beginning in the autumn of 2023 with continual very wet weather and severe flooding in parts of the garden (resulting from extreme waterlogging in the adjacent field plus our large pond overflowing), a very mild winter (bad for insects in general), a poor spring, followed by a generally cool, unsunny, wet and windy summer. Awful ingredients for butterfly survival, and do remember that butterflies are regarded as a strong indicator of the state of nature in general.

We really value the importance of our continued alliance with Black Sluice and all the nature bodies who continue to support us, and suddenly it is more important than ever for these mini habitats like ours to strive and be protected, creating links within the national natural framework. All of our types of mini habitats have increased their value tenfold due to the precarious imbalance of nature and its decline.

Species breakdown for 2024

Green rules ok, with red being the opposite! The 2023 report was predominantly green - it couldn't be more different this last year!

*denotes day-flying moth

Brimstone. For the third year, a good spring for them. But this did not continue with the new brood.

Brown Argus. None at all seen in the first brood, with low numbers in the second, but at least they showed! Very behind their stablemate the Common Blue this year.

***Cinnabar.** Half the numbers of last year.

Clouded Yellow. I don't recall any of this migrant species being seen in the county, and very few in the UK.

Comma. A poor year with below average numbers.

Common Blue. A better than average first brood but much fewer in the second. Did much better than the Brown Argus.

***Common Carpet.** Surprisingly none seen after their breakthrough last year.

***Dusky Sallow.** None seen.

Essex Skipper. Half of last year's numbers.

Gatekeeper. As with the other main grassland Browns, numbers are way down.

Green-veined White. Notably below average.

Holly Blue. Did ok in the spring brood, less so in the second.

***Humming-bird Hawk-moth.** As with most migrants, nothing special this year.

Large Skipper. Seems to be the exception to the general doom and gloom rule this year. Purely in terms of numbers seen, this was its third best season!

Large White. Did well in the third brood but overall below average.

***Latticed Heath.** No sightings despite showing signs of becoming more regular in recent years.

Meadow Brown. 149 last year – 38 this! A very poor show.

***Mint Moth.** Another poor year for the Mint Moths.

Orange Tip. Below average count and total.

Painted Lady. Another poor year, only 8 seen. With this being the UK's most famous immigrant species, it makes you wonder whether they deliberately stayed away!!!

***Pale Straw Pearl.** Its third year without any sightings.

Peacock. Did better than the other aristocratic Nymphalid residents but way below its norm.

Purple Hairstreak. Another disappointing year mainly due to the terrible weather. Being arboreal, windy weather made sightings difficult.

Red Admiral. Much lower numbers.

Ringlet. Appeared to be all set to go against the grain but then the sudden decline syndrome kicked in big time!

***Scarlet Tiger.** Totally unexpected first time seen here. 3 seen. A glimmer of hope!

Silver-washed Fritillary. No confirmed sightings, possibly one male patrolling the dyke bank.

***Silver Y.** Another poor year for this normally common to abundant migrant moth.

***Six-spot Burnet.** Slightly up on last year, surprisingly.

Small Copper. Only one seen prior to the third brood which made a valiant attempt at recovery.

Small Heath. One of the few to hold its own in this all-time worst season, which is especially pleasing due to us managing to re-establish it in recent years, and its status as a BAPS species, regarded as a priority species for conservation efforts.

Small Skipper. No change. The mystery of its low numbers continues.

Small Tortoiseshell. Devastating year – the worst hit.

Small White. Lowest total since 2012.

Speckled Wood. Could not compete with last year's phenomenal numbers but made a valiant attempt!

Wall Brown. Former resident, now found only in coastal habitats. Disappointingly still no return despite very good numbers seen in all three broods in its coastal strongholds.

White-letter Hairstreak. Disappointing numbers but to be expected this year. Being arboreal, windy weather made sightings difficult.

***Yellow-barred Longhorn.** Usually in twos and threes but 22 seen this year. Brilliant increase. The exception to the rule

BLACK SLUICE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

BIOSECURITY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Policy No. 53

Board approved:	
Review period:	5 years



Biosecurity Policy

1. PURPOSE

This document sets out the Biosecurity Policy of Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board. It covers activities undertaken by the IDB daily to reduce the spread and damage from invasive non-native species. It is intended that the Board's staff and contractors will follow procedures commensurate with this Policy.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Invasive non-native species are widespread nationally and if left uncontrolled present a threat to our aquatic and riparian systems. It is imperative that our field operations, to manage flood risk and water levels, do not exacerbate the risks to the environment and economy that are posed by these species. Failure to minimise the spread of invasive non-native species, when visiting a site where an invasive non-native species is known to be present, can risk prosecution under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

Vigilance is required if we are to stop the spread of invasive non-native species, and it is imperative that we integrate basic biosecurity in our operations to prevent this spread. Much to do with biosecurity involves awareness, common sense and agreed procedures.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Board is responsible for reviewing and approving the content and implementation of this Policy.

3.2 The Board will ensure any new contracts let will include reference to the Policy where a risk is considered to exist arising from the works involved.

3.3 All Board Members, staff and contractors are required to comply with the Policy's requirements and share responsibility for performance in implementing the Policy in regard to the health, safety and welfare of the environment.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 This Policy is implemented through supporting guidance documentation covering biosecurity procedures.
- 4.2 Where biosecurity risks have been identified operational Staff will be provided with training and information on identification of invasive nonnative species likely to be found within the Drainage District.
- 4.3 All operational machinery, tools and personal protection equipment (PPE) identified as at risk of cross-contamination will be subject to 'check, clean, dry' decontamination procedures before moving between operations on watercourses and sites.
- 4.4 All Operational Staff will report sightings of invasive non-native species to the Works Supervisor or the Environment Officer who will in turn notify the GB Non-Native Species Secretariat, if required.

Biosecurity Procedures

5. PURPOSE

- 5.1 These procedures aim to help Board members, staff, and operators working for the IDB to identify key biosecurity risks pertinent to the internal drainage district and the Board's activities and identify measures to address these risks.
- 5.2 Accidentally spread invasive non-native species may be harmful to the environment and potentially damaging the reputation of the Board, compromising its ability to operate, or work with partners. Operators visiting a site where an invasive non-native species is known to be present, should take measures to ensure they do not spread it. Failure to do so can risk prosecution under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

6. OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Increase awareness around invasive non-native species via training.
- 6.2 Identify, and keep a record of, known areas where invasive non-native species are an issue.
- 6.3 Ensure effective cleaning of equipment, machinery, and clothes.
- 6.4 Ensure operators take care to avoid transporting water and material between water bodies where a risk has been identified.
- 6.5 Ensure ongoing monitoring of invasive non-native species when undertaking operations.
- 6.6 Remain vigilant when undertaking operations to identify any further areas where invasive non-native species exist.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

Awareness

- 7.1 The Board's Environment Officer will have oversight of biosecurity, disseminate information, and report on these matters.
- 7.2 The Board's workforce will be provided with information on invasive nonnative species and biosecurity practices. workforce will also be encouraged to seek information and ask questions in time of need.

The Environment Agency and Non-native Species Secretariat have relevant useful information.

- 7.3 If a risk is identified then the operator concerned or contractor should be made aware of the priority invasive non-native species, with specific attention to aquatic and riparian species of concern and those known to be present in the surrounding area. Training for staff and operatives shall be provided as appropriate, and information will be disseminated through toolbox talks, workshops, leaflets, emails etc. Contractors should be asked to confirm that they have similar arrangements in place.
- 7.4 Signage, species alerts/information sheets, or guidance should be in place, making operators aware of the risks, and providing advice on how to prevent spread.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1 Operators should be vigilant in the field for invasive non-native species and have an appropriate mechanism for recording and reporting sightings of suspected species, location, and relevant details.
- 8.2 New sightings should be reported to the Works Supervisor or the Environment Officer, who will in turn notify other authorities and/or land managers as appropriate. The Plant Tracker app (www.plantracker.org.uk/), available free for Apple and Android devices, shows you how to identify invasive non-native plant species and enables you to easily submit geo-located photos whenever you find one.

9. Planning works

- 9.1 Biosecurity should be taken into consideration alongside other factors, such as health and safety, when planning operations and standard working procedures.
- 9.2 The risk of spreading invasive non-native species can be reduced by reducing the contact time in which equipment is exposed to the water. This is particularly important for items such as trailers, which have cavities that may retain water and be hard to inspect.
- 9.3 Propagules are small bits of plant that become detached and give rise to a new plant. Working practices that either reduce, or contain and remove, propagules should be encouraged where practicable, especially in regard to mechanical vegetation control.

10. Cleaning

- 10.1 Remember: Check, Clean, Dry www.nonnativespecies.org/checkcleandry/
- 10.2 Decontamination is an essential process to be carried out prior to leaving a site where invasive species are present. This ensures that any foreign matter remains on the land/watercourse of origin, rather than taking it to another location.
- 10.3 Where it is not possible to conduct the decontamination prior to leaving the land/watercourse where the work was conducted (e.g. steam cleaning larger equipment), the operation should be carried out immediately afterwards at the depot or another secure site before the next operation.
- 10.4 Where a cross-contamination risk has been identified any field team moving from a contaminated site should carry a 'disinfection box'. This should contain an appropriate commercial disinfectant, a spray bottle, cloths or sponges, a scrubbing brush and protective gloves.
- 10.5 On completion of a field operation, for situations where cross contamination is identified as a risk, the following principles apply:
- (a) Visually inspect all tools, equipment and machinery that has come into contact with the water for evidence of attached plant or animal material, or adherent mud or debris.
 - (b) Remove any attached or adherent material before leaving the site of operation.
 - (c) Washing/hosing with water will be sufficient to remove debris from most tools, equipment and machinery. Use hot water where possible.
 - (d) Ensure that all water is drained from any water retaining compartments, outboard motors, tanks and other equipment before transportation elsewhere.
 - (e) A high-pressure washer or steam cleaner may be essential for more difficult stains or soil, paying particular attention to the tyres, tracks and undercarriage of vehicles and buckets, hulls, outboard motors and submerged parts of machinery. High-pressure steam cleaning, with water >40°C, is recommended for larger equipment, excavators, boats, trailers, and outboard motors that are being moved from one watercourse to another.

(f) Clothing and PPE should be visually inspected, and any attached vegetation or debris removed. Soiled clothing and PPE should be removed for laundering and boots scrubbed clean; hands and other body parts may also need cleaning.

(g) Finally, decontamination by spraying on a commercial disinfectant at the recommended strength to the cleaned boots, tools, equipment or machinery will ensure any remaining disease agents or pests are destroyed.

10.6 Every effort should be made to ensure that the decontamination process is a public exercise and where appropriate tactfully brought to the attention of the landowner or manager at the appropriate time. It is not just a question of doing the right thing but also being seen to be doing it. In this way, public confidence will be maintained in flood and water level management operations.

11. APPROVAL

This policy and procedures were approved by Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board and will be reviewed at a minimum, every five years. The procedures are open to adaptation and improvement at any time.

Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board

Policy No: 00

Conservation Policy

Review Dates:

Original Issue	
Board Approved	

1. INTRODUCTION

The Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board has adopted this Policy, which sets out how it intends meeting the duty placed on Internal Drainage Boards under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1994 and other relevant legislation, to undertake watercourse maintenance and water level management in a way that is compatible with Nature conservation interests.

The Board recognises the need to positively demonstrate that its watercourse maintenance and water level management are carried out in a manner that reduces flood risk, safeguards nature conservation interests and wherever possible makes a positive contribution to the enhancement of the natural environment.

Defra required all IDB's to have a Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) written by April 2010.

The Board's BAP can be viewed on the website: [Home | Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board \(blacksluiceidb.gov.uk\)](#)

2. THE DRAINAGE DISTRICT

The Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board has an operational area covering 35,000 hectares (112,000 acres) of low lying fenland south west of Boston. The area is protected from flooding by the sea defences of the Haven and the Wash, the banks of the River Witham on the north west boundary and the Bourne Eau and River Glen banks on the southern boundary. The South Forty Foot Drain runs through the centre of the District and the southern reaches and the high level carrier drains are embanked to prevent flooding to the fen areas.

A greater part of the area is below high tide level, and the Board maintains thirty four pumping stations to control the water levels in the low lying Fens. The Board has a supervisory role in all aspects relating to the drainage of land.

Whilst the Board has powers to undertake works on any non main river watercourse within its drainage District, direct maintenance is limited to 480 miles (700km) of watercourses designated as "Board's Drains". The responsibility for maintenance of the remaining watercourses in the area, normally called dykes and ditches, rests with the landowner known in law as the "riparian owner".

3. STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

The Land Drainage Act 1991, as amended by the Land Drainage Act 1994, places a duty on Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) with respect to the environment and recreation. In simple terms, the amended act requires IDBs, in so far as may be consistent with their functions, to further the conservation of flora, fauna and geological or physiographical features of special interest, and to have regard for protecting sites of archaeological or historical interest.

IDBs should also take into account the effect that any proposals they wish to promote could have on the beauty or amenity of any rural or urban area, or on any such flora, fauna, features, buildings, sites or objects in that area.

The Environment Impact Assessment (Land Drainage Improvement Works Regulations 1999 (SI 1999 No 1783) and 2005 (2 & 3) requires IDBs to undertake an assessment of the impact on the environment of projects likely to have significant effects and under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, IDBs must consult English Nature on proposed works or operations if these impact on the interest features of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's).

Under the habitat Regulations 1994, IDBs are required to consider the likely significant effect of their plans or projects on European designated sites, which in the case of the Black Sluice IDB would be the Wash area Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is however unlikely that the nature, scale and timing of operations undertaken by the Board would impact on this site.

IDBs are Section 28G Authorities under the Countryside Rights of Way (CROW) Act and will comply with the requirements of this Act.

4. SITES OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSERVATION INTEREST

Within or immediately adjacent to the Black Sluice IDB District, the following sites have been designated for their environmental and conservation interest.

Special Area of Conservation:

- The Wash

Sites of Special Scientific Interest:

- Horbling Fen SSSI:

The SSSI at Horbling Fen has been designated because this particular area of Horbling Fen contains sediments deposited between the end of the last Ice Age and the present day and provides a record of inundations of the sea during this period. The site has considerable potential for future studies of these deposits.

5. THE BOARD

The Board consists of elected members representing Agricultural ratepayers and members appointed by District Councils. The Board agrees the policy and operation of the Board's workforce and is advised by the officers employed by the Board.

The Board has an Environmental Committee which meets on a regular basis with the following terms of reference:-

1. To monitor the Board's performance in relation to the Lincolnshire Biodiversity Action Plan and Government's Environmental Targets.
2. To promote best practice through employee training and awareness.
3. To inform the public of the Board's commitment to environmental issues.
4. To promote initiatives, within watercourses maintained by the Board under statutory powers, that result in a meaningful environmental gain.

The Board is achieving the aims in the following ways:-

Monitoring

- A programme of surveying watercourses is being undertaken.
- The workforce record Biodiversity Action Plan species seen during their work.

Best Practice

- An agreed method of maintenance of drainage channels is followed by the workforce.
- Regular training courses are arranged.

Informing the Public

- Publications
- Exhibitions and Shows
- Website

Environmental Gain

- Improvement to watercourses.
- Resisting unnecessary culverting of drainage channels.

6. ROUTINE MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

Regular maintenance of the Board's drains is essential for land drainage and flood defence and for maintaining the biodiversity of the watercourse system. The maintenance work is carried out sympathetically and with nature conservation interests kept firmly in mind.

Maintenance specifications provide guidance on the appropriate standards to be achieved, taking into consideration the operational needs of the catchment served, the impact of the work on the conservation interest of the watercourse and the natural habitats provided by the watercourse. In rural catchments watercourses serving primarily agricultural needs offer the greatest scope for effecting environmental gain and the specifications adopted for these watercourses reflect the advantages to the environment, to conservation interests and to the Board in a reduced level of maintenance.

The Board pays particular attention to the fact that many drains provide habitat for water voles, and these habitats are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The Board is recording locations where water vole habitat has been found so that the maintenance of watercourses at these locations can be undertaken without damaging or obstructing access to their burrows.

7. ANNUAL OPERATIONS

Bank vegetation maintenance and in-channel weed clearance will be carried out on an annual basis in the Board's drainage channels. Most watercourses will only be cut once each year. The work will commence mid-way through July and the Board will aim to have completed the greater part of the work by the end of October. In most drains the bank on which the machinery will operate will be flail mown to allow the drivers of the machinery to see where they are operating. The bed of the drain will be cleared of weed growth to increase conveyance, reduce water levels, and protect the functioning of structures which may otherwise become blocked. In most cases the far bank of the drainage channel will remain uncut.

In larger watercourses fringes of uncut vegetation at the water's edge will be left as this helps prevent erosion to the banks and provides both food and shelter for small mammals and birds.

In a small number of specified drainage channels which protect large numbers of properties, one bank will be continuously flail mown from March until September to allow the channel to be cleared early in June to minimise the flood risk to these properties.

The Board uses herbicides in a limited number of situations where the use of mechanical control of weed growth would be more environmentally invasive.

The work will be carried out in accordance with all the regulations by trained members of the workforce or contractors after approval has been given by the Environment Agency.

8. DESILTING OPERATIONS

Desilting operations are most often undertaken during the winter months. In most cases the work needs to be carried out every ten years, and involves the removal of silt from the bed of the drain. Additional work to remove material from the banks is only undertaken when the banks have become very steep or where slips have occurred. The need for works is entirely related to flood defence needs so as to maintain capacity, stabilise banks and to maintain conveyance. Reforming (removing firm material) and regrading (bed and banks) requires a site-specific approach, always involving an ecologist, often involving River Corridor Survey and sometimes involving an Environmental Impact Assessment. Protection of existing ecological interest is paramount in desilting operations and riffles, areas of cobbles and gravels will be left untouched or replaced. One working bank only will normally be used, being chosen for ease of access, sensitivity of vegetation present, adjacent land use including presence of crops and the need to minimise works along the channel. Variation in the long-section as well as the cross-section of a watercourse will be an objective. Enhancements will be considered where possible and working undertaken wherever possible to mimic natural fluvial processes. Spoil may be incorporated into adjacent land via thin spreading, usually within 2-10m of the watercourse. On pasture, spoil may be placed into a trench and then covered with the topsoil.

9. TREE MAINTENANCE

Tree maintenance may be necessary to provide access to a channel for maintenance work, to remove the risk of trees falling into the channel or to remove low-growing limbs that accumulate floating wrack and thus reduce conveyance. The Board's practice is to retain old trees and manage as few trees as possible, as lightly as possible. Felling is the last resort. When gaining access for channel works it may be possible to leave a 'tunnel' within overhanging trees. If material must be burned it will be done away from important or vulnerable areas. Where acceptable, it may be heaped above flood levels, to form "habitat piles" for invertebrates and nesting birds. Pollarding may be undertaken in appropriate areas between November and March following assessment for presence of bats. Where access is needed over hedges, then coppicing may be undertaken. A rotation of coppicing along a river helps maintain various stages of tree growth and refugia and cover for wildlife.

10. WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT PLANS

Water Level Maintenance Plans (WLMP's) provide a means by which the water level requirements for a range of activities in a particular area, including agriculture, flood defence and land drainage, conservation, amenity and recreation can be formalised, and where possible, integrated.

A formal WLMP has been completed for the Horbling Catchment to comply with the requirement that these should be completed for all areas where there is an SSSI within the catchment. In other catchments informal plans exist which raise water levels during the summer months to provide both conservation and agricultural benefits.

11. CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board will:-

- Continue to develop operational guidelines for incorporating into future work programmes, to safeguard and enhance existing nature conservation resources, taking into account the operational needs of the drainage district.
- Work with English Nature and Others to promote the enhancement and protection of conservation interests, in so far as may be consistent with its operational functions.
- Through the application of Land Drainage Consents and Bye-Laws, seek to control the inappropriate use of the Board's watercourses where this would result in damage to natural features of conservation interest and habitat importance.
- Report on all aspects of environmental management to the Board's Environment Committee.

Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board

Policy No: 00

Badger Policy

Review Dates:

Original Issue	
Board Approved	

1. Introduction

Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (BSIDB) is committed to the protection and conservation of badgers (*Meles meles*) and their habitats. This policy has been put in place to ensure the legal and ethical management of badgers during the boards drainage operations.

The policy outlines the Board's recognition of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, and its requirements for working in areas where badgers may be present. All works affecting badgers or their setts, will be conducted with due consideration for their welfare and in accordance with legal obligations, particularly those specified under the CL27 licence. The board holds a high-level of responsibility to prevent harm and disturbance to badgers, their setts and their foraging habitats.

2. Legal Framework

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 is the primary legislation for the protection of badgers and their setts in the United Kingdom. Unlike other species legislations, the Badger Act 1992 is unique in that it is in place to protect badgers from cruelty and harm, focusing on animal welfare compared to enhancing numbers and conservation.

Under the Act, it is an offence to:

- Kill, injure, or take a badger.
- Disturb a badger while it occupies a sett.
- Damage, destroy, or obstruct access to a sett.

3. Natural England CL27 Badger License

The Natural England CL27 Licence allows drainage boards to interfere with badger setts for watercourse and drainage purposes. The licence is held by all operatives and staff of BSIDB that work in the field and may encounter badgers and their setts as part of their daily duties. Full terms and regulations of the license and its usage can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/badgers-licence-to-interfere-with-setts-for-drainage-purposes>.

Following CL27, drainage operatives and their registered assistants are able to interfere with a badger sett by means of:

- Cutting bank vegetation with hand tools or tractor mounted flail

- Cutting bank vegetation and processing with a purpose-built harvester
- Cutting mid-channel vegetation with a 360 excavator
- Reforming banks with a 360 excavator
- Desilting drainage beds with a 360 excavator
- Maintaining low-level drainage culverts with a 360 excavator

All field operatives and staff who may come into contact with badgers and their setts will hold a registered CL27 licence issued by Natural England.

3. Responsibilities of BSIDB

BSIDB holds numerous responsibilities to ensure the protection of badgers and their habitat, to act as good environmental stewards, and to abide by the regulations set out by Natural England as holders of the CL27 license. Failure to follow these regulations, can result in the removal of licences and potential further penalties.

The board will also follow the latest good practice guidance set out by ADA for working around badgers, which can currently be found at: https://www.ada.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ADA_CL27_Badger_Class_Licence_Advice_Note_Sept_2021.pdf

3.1 Avoiding Disturbance

The board will ensure that no sett is disturbed, destroyed or blocked unless authorised under the CL27 license. In the first instance, all cases will be assessed to try and prevent working near a badger sett. Planning ahead can prevent and minimise potential legislation breaches. For example, working from the opposite side of the bank from an active sett.

Where avoiding disturbance is not possible, the board will operate under the strict regulations of the CL27 license and preserve the badger sett to as full extent as possible, and only destruct a sett in a last resort circumstance to preserve public health and safety. The board will restrict channel works around setts to as short a time frame as possible to minimise disturbance.

3.2. Surveying and Monitoring

Excluding routine channel maintenance (e.g., vegetation cutting), prior to any planned work a badger survey will be conducted by the boards Environment Officer or a suitably licensed ecologist to identify the presence of badgers or their setts within the proposed work area.

During the course of any work conducted where there is a badger sett, continuous monitoring will be undertaken to ensure no disturbance outside of what is legally permitted under license occurs. For large projects, post-completion surveying will be undertaken to measure any lasting impacts on the badger population.

Field operatives of BSIDB will contribute to the long-term monitoring of badgers and their setts within the boards area, by reporting any sightings via remote TomTom trackers. This data will be analysed and contribute towards project planning and the boards Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

3.3 Training and Awareness

BSIDB will routinely provide badger specific training to all staff who operate in the field, and any external contractors involved with a project. Staff will be trained and competent in identifying badgers, their setts and field signs to ensure they are alert and operating safely. Staff will also understand the legal protections afforded to badgers under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the potential penalties that may come from disobeying legislation. Field workers will also remain trained in how to report any sightings of badgers and their setts through remote trackers in order to keep the boards records accurate and up to date.

3.4 License Reporting

When the board is going to conduct works that interfere with badgers and their setts under license, the board will contact Natural England and inform them of the works and the location at least 48 hours prior.

Detailed records of all surveys, licence applications, and mitigation measures will be kept by BSIDB. These records will ensure compliance with legal obligations and serve as a point of reference for future work.

All staff holding a CL27 license are responsible for recording and reporting details when operating under the licence, and a return of the records must be sent back to Natural England by January 31st each year. Returns are to be made even if the licence has not been used in a given year.

3.5 Timing of Works

Works will be scheduled, where possible, to avoid the badger breeding season, which typically spans December to June. Any activity within this period that may disturb setts or badger activity will require special attention to minimise risk and comply with licence conditions.

Under CL27 licence conditions, the board will not conduct bank reformation and desilting operations where there are badger setts during the months of February, March or April as this is the most sensitive breeding time for badgers.

3.6. Emergency Protocol

If a badger or a sett is unexpectedly encountered during works, all activities will cease immediately. BSIDB will consult with the Environment Officer or a licensed ecologist to evaluate the situation and determine the best course of action.

Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board

Policy No: 00

Water Voles Policy

Review Dates:

Original Issue	
Board Approved	

1. Introduction

The Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (BSIDB) has formulated this policy on working around Water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*) to ensure all board operations comply with the legislation of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and to maintain responsibility for acting ethically and consciously to contribute to the conservation of water voles and enhancement of their habitat.

Water voles are the fastest declining mammal in Britain, facing challenges such as habitat loss and the invasive American mink. Water voles were historically found in nearly every water way in England, but have now been lost in 90% of sites, therefore the species are of special importance to the boards Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

2. Legal Framework

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the primary legislation protecting water voles in England, making it an offence to:

- Kill, injure or take a water vole
- Damage or destroy a structure or place used for shelter or protection
- Disturb them in a place for shelter or protection
- Obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection
- Possess or control a water vole (alive or dead)

Water voles are listed as a rare and most threatened species of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Public bodies, including internal drainage boards, must have regard for this legislation when planning and making decisions.

3. Responsibilities of BSIDB

BSIDB holds numerous responsibilities to ensure the protection of water voles and their habitat. The board follows all legal regulations and follows wider advice and guidance set out by external bodies to operate in the best way considering water voles.

3.1. Control of American Mink

The eradication of the non-native invasive American mink is a direct way to support water vole conservation. BSIDB partners with the Waterlife Recovery Trust (WRT), contributing to mink eradication by deploying rafts across the drainage network. The board will support water vole conservation by continuing to partner with WRT until mink have successfully been eradicated from England.

3.2. Watercourse Management

Poor watercourse management is one of the leading factors contributing to habitat loss and fragmentation for water voles. BSIDB will follow operational measures set out in 'The Drainage Channel Biodiversity Manual' by ADA and Natural England, to avoid impact to the habitat whilst conducting routine drain maintenance.

The board can avoid the risk of unknowingly destroying and damaging water vole burrows through strategic management and operational techniques. By assuming and acting as though water voles are present in every water course, unnecessary disturbance can be avoided. BSIDB will:

- Refrain from scraping the toe of the bank when using buckets to remove vegetation or desilt, to ensure no unnecessary destruction to water vole burrows.
- Re-seed bank sides promptly according to correct times of year after conducting re-profiling to restore habitat, factoring in vegetation types that are favoured by water voles for foraging and protection.
- Reduce impact by planning ahead of maintenance works and capital projects to explore alternative options for working around water vole burrows and key habitat.
- Work from only one side of the bank where possible for works, and continue to alternate bank cuts annually.
- Conducting works in water vole habitat at the least sensitive times of year (November–February).

3.3. Education and Training

BSIDB will routinely provide water vole specific training to all staff who operate in the field, and any external contractors involved with a project. Staff will be trained and competent in identifying water voles and American mink, along with their burrows and resting places. Employees of the board will also be aware of legal protections afforded to water voles and the potential penalties that may arise from acting outside of the law.

3.4. Surveying and monitoring

The boards workforce will contribute to the long-term monitoring of water voles within the boards area, by reporting sightings and burrows via remote TomTom

trackers. This data will be analysed and contribute towards project planning and the boards BAP.

Ahead of any works outside of routine channel maintenance, e.g., bank reprofiling or capital works, the boards EO or a suitably qualified ecologist will conduct water vole surveys that align with the guidance set out in the 'Water Vole Handbook' by the Mammal Society, namely:

- Two water vole surveys in the breeding season – one in the first half (mid-April to the end of June), and one in the second half (July-September). Surveys should be 2 months apart.

3.5. Mitigation

Water vole mitigation will only be used by the board as a last resort option. Mitigation will be considered when there is no feasible option for safely working around water voles, without breaking legislation or impacting the overall habitat of the species.

There are two main methods of mitigation for water voles, displacement and translocation. Both methods require a licence granted by Natural England. The

Where possible, the board will internally employ at least one personnel who holds a Natural England Class License (CL24), which allows internal drainage boards to intentionally displace water voles for work on flood defences, water courses or drainage systems. Usage of the CL24 licence will be subject to the regulations as set out by Natural England, including restrictions on timings for work to take place. The full licence overview can be found at

[Licence to allow internal drainage boards to intentionally displace water voles for work on flood defences, water courses or drainage systems \(CL24\) - GOV.UK](#)

If an employee of the board does not hold a CL27 licence, a Natural England A11 licence for water vole mitigation can be applied for on a case-by-case basis.

4. Policy Review

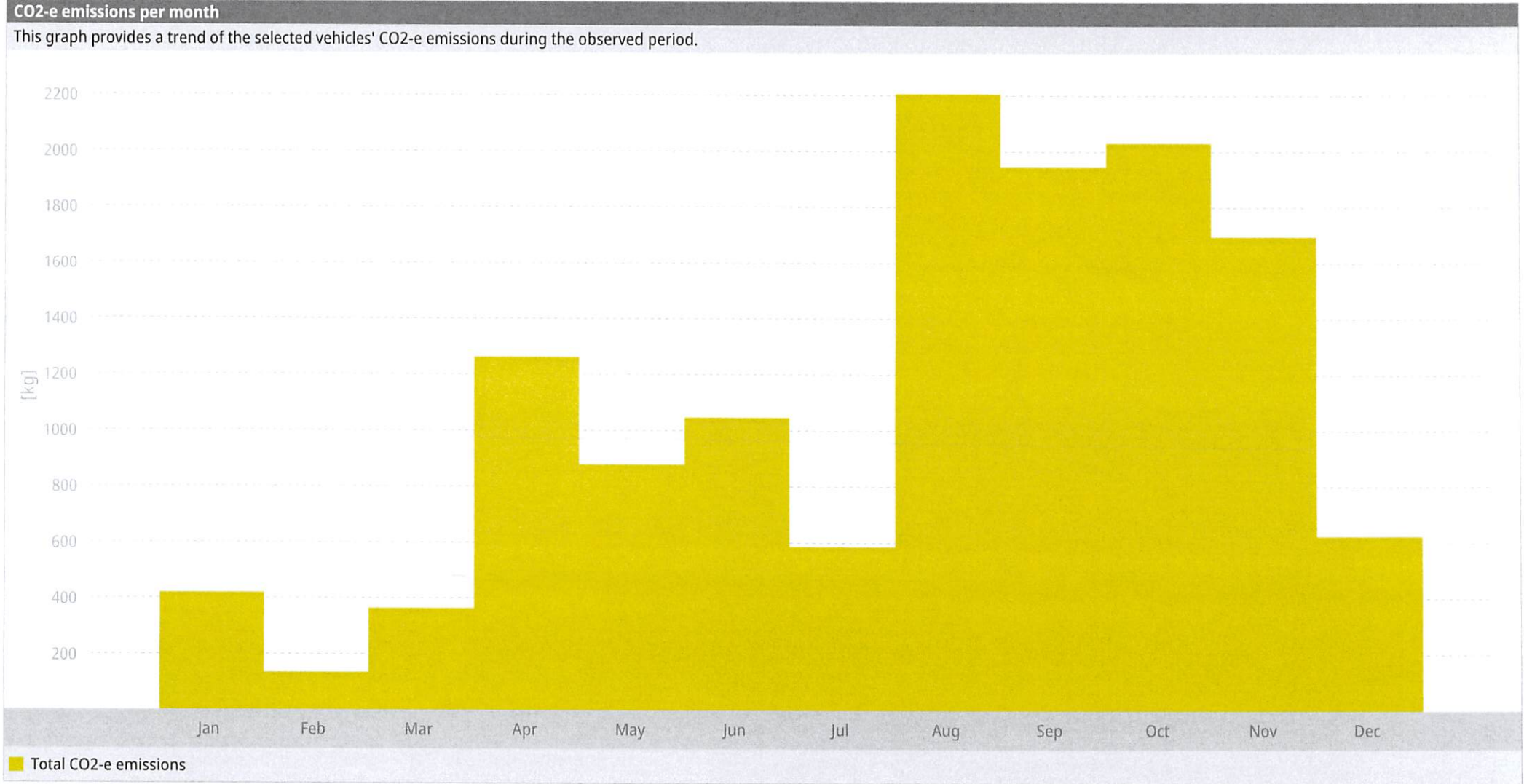
This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or following legislative changes.

Consolidated CO2 emissions annual report



Period Mon 01/01/2024 - Tue 31/12/2024

Vehicle All deleted vehicles included



This report covers direct CO2-e emissions (Scope 1) and indirect energy grid CO2-e emissions from company-owned electric vehicles (Scope 2). CSRD compliant.

Summary							
Total		Total CO2-e emissions: 13,206.4 kg CO2-e emissions calculated based on fuel: CO2-e emissions calculated based on distance: 13,206.4 kg Scope 1 CO2-e emissions: 13,206.4 kg		Total fuel consumption: Gaseous fuel consumption: Energy consumption: Scope 2 CO2-e emissions:		Total distance: 24,103.2 km Number of vehicles: 10 Number of vehicles without CO2-e calculations: 2	
Date	Total CO2-e emissions	CO2-e emissions calculated	CO2-e emissions calculated	Number of vehicles	Number of vehicles without CO2-		
2024-1	419.9 kg		419.9 kg	8	1		
2024-2	134.5 kg		134.5 kg	7	0		
2024-3	364.2 kg		364.2 kg	9	0		
2024-4	1,263.9 kg		1,263.9 kg	9	0		
2024-5	881.6 kg		881.6 kg	8	1		
2024-6	1,048.1 kg		1,048.1 kg	8	1		
2024-7	587.4 kg		587.4 kg	7	0		
2024-8	2,206.5 kg		2,206.5 kg	10	0		
2024-9	1,946.1 kg		1,946.1 kg	10	0		
2024-10	2,031.2 kg		2,031.2 kg	10	0		
2024-11	1,697.3 kg		1,697.3 kg	10	0		
2024-12	625.7 kg		625.7 kg	9	0		